This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

172044Z Feb 04

UNCLAS MONTREAL 000252

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR S/ES-O, WHA/CAN AND CA/OCS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958:N/A
TAGS: EAIR ASEC CASC CA
SUBJECT: FLIGHTS GROUNDED A SECOND TIME IN THREE DAYS AT PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU AIRPORT; BUT DOMESTIC FLIGHTS ONLY

REF: MONTREAL 0233

¶1. SUMMARY. DOMESTIC OUTBOUND FLIGHTS WERE GROUNDED, DELAYED OR RECALLED TO PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU AIRPORT (AKA DORVAL AIRPORT) FOR THE SECOND TIME IN THREE DAYS. THE INCIDENT THAT PROMPTED THE SEALING OF THE JETTY OCCURRED AT APPROXIMATELY 9:05AM ON SATURDAY (FEB. 14) AND LASTED ABOUT FIVE HOURS. NORMAL OPERATIONS DIDN'T RESUME UNTIL CLOSE TO 2:00PM. UNLIKE REFTEL INCIDENT (FEB.11), ACCORDING TO A DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS) SUPERVISOR, U.S.-BOUND FLIGHTS (FEB. 14) WERE NOT DISRUPTED. END SUMMARY.

¶2. A PISTOL-SHAPED CIGARETTE LIGHTER DISRUPTED DOMESTIC FLIGHTS (2/14) AT DORVAL AIRPORT. A CANADIAN AIR TRANSPORT SAFETY AUTHORITY (CATSA) AGENT REPORTED HAVING SPOTTED ON THE X-RAY OF A CARRYON BAG AN OBJECT RESSEMBLING A PISTOL. REPORTEDLY, BY THE TIME THE CATSA AGENT CHECKING BAGS WAS ADVISED BY ANOTHER AGENT WHAT HAD BEEN SEEN ON THE X-RAY, THE BAG AND ITS OWNER HAD DISAPPEARED INTO THE DOMESTIC TERMINAL. CONSEQUENTLY, AN ALARM WAS SOUNDED AND THE JETTY SEALED.

¶3. THE OWNER OF THE BAG, A 35-YEAR OLD WOMAN BOUND FOR CUBA, ALLEGED SHE WASN'T AWARE THAT THE OBJECT IN HER CARRYON BAG WAS ILLEGAL.

¶4. WHILE REFTEL SECURITY BREACH OF TWO DAYS PRIOR RECEIVED MINIMAL PRESS ATTENTION, THE LATEST INCIDENT MADE THE FRONT-PAGE OF THE FRENCH-LANGUAGE AND ENGLISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS, LA PRESSE AND THE MONTREAL GAZETTE, RESPECTIVELY. LA PRESSE CITED A STATEMENT FROM A CATSA AGENT ABOUT MINIMAL TRAINING NEW CATSA AGENTS RECEIVED PRIOR TO ASSUMPTION OF BAGGAGE SCREENING ROLES LAST YEAR. LA PRESSE ALSO REPORTED THE CATSA AGENT MISSED THE CIGARETTE LIGHTER BECAUSE OF BEING DISTRACTED BY A PAIR OF SCISSORS IN ANOTHER BAG. A DHS SUPERVISOR, BRIEFED BY AIRPORT SECURITY, DISCUSSED THE INCIDENT WITH POST'S CONSUL GENERAL. HE CONFIRMED THAT THE PISTOL-SHAPED CIGARETTE LIGHTER CAUSED THE ALARM, BUT WAS UNABLE TO CONFIRM THE REPORT ABOUT WHAT HAD DISTRACTED THE CATSA AGENT.

¶5. IN THE END, 45 FLIGHTS WERE DELAYED, SOME 400 PASSENGERS AND THEIR LUGGAGE WERE RESTERILIZED (RESCREENED) AND DOMESTIC OPERATIONS WERE DISRUPTED FOR APPROXIMATELY FIVE HOURS.
ALLEN